

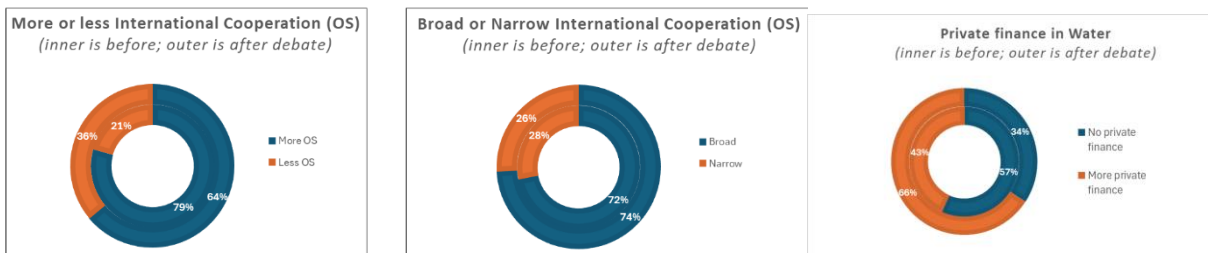
# Synthesis report NICC World Water Day event, 22 March 2024

The World Water Day Event was organised by the Water-timelines working group of [NICC](#) in the format of a debate , using theses and anti-theses to sharpen the spread of arguments and opinions around International Development Cooperation (in Dutch ‘OS’). The event was focussed on an audience of the younger generations (students, Young professionals) . The three selected critical themes regarding a future development of Dutch International Cooperation were:

- more or less development budget
- focus or a wider, integrated approach
- yes or no to privately financed water infrastructure investments (water as an example of public goods)

The first two issues are not restricted to water, while the third one is, but can also work for other basic needs. The themes were selected from an earlier NICC debate in October 2023 and enriched with the input of a reference group of students and young professionals. Each theme was debated for 30 minutes after being introduced by one of the organisers and thesis and anti-thesis were pitched in each 2 minutes by selected practitioners. The audience (approx. 55 participants) were asked to vote before and after the debate.

## Voting



**More or less OS:** there is a clear preference from the audience for more budget to OS. Explanations from those who oppose it, were based on argued criticism on the approaches and priorities in OS (e.g. the link to Dutch trade and self-interest), the quality and the negative side effects (‘unintended impacts’). Their plea got some appreciation in the final voting. *There was not much on issues such as climate change and migration, while we had expected such inputs. The issue at hand is not so much the budget, but the type and quality of aid, and whether it can create the relevant changes.*

**Focus or a wider, integrated approach OS:** there is a clear preference for a more integrated approach, away from the narrow focus that the NL is applying now. In the debate the lack of consistent policy (for example trading protection rules versus bridging the gap between poor and rich, have and have nots) was mentioned, by that including multiple policy areas (not only OS as a single issue), more participatory processes and more critical self-reflection on typical Dutch solutions that we think we are good in. Nevertheless, there remained a group that is in favour to focus the support, in order to make a difference. *The issue was too complex to get a clear outcome. The debate did not cause changes in the voting.*

**With or without private funding for public goods:** Here we saw a remarkable change in voting in favour of allowing (some) private funding. In the debate, the image of private investors did change. The outcome was that they could get involved but should not become too dominant and need to be regulated. Also, the social benefits from financially sound investments were acknowledged. The ethical aspects that support OS however should not be overshadowed by commercial profit making as goal.

In the spontaneous wrap up it was highlighted that:

1. *Despite all the comments on social-societal-political-ethical aspects, the discussion often was about money. OS can be a leverage instrument for system change and mind-shifting.*
2. *The funding gap was well debated, including the source to find it: public or private. The public (local) responsibility is undoubted but difficult to ensure. Private money needs its return on investments. Donor money should be more thoroughly debated on its principal purpose. Self-interest is hard to be avoided?*
3. *Pledges were made for:*
  - a. *More win-win models*
  - b. *More emphasis on social return*
  - c. *There should be more attention for non-foreseen negative effects by Aid*
  - d. *OS -small money can leverage significant impact by emphasizing capacity building as the most effective way of Aid.*
4. *The discussion was not a black or white discussion, nuances and consent were in the room in abundance. From both Dutch and international participants, practitioners, and politicians in the room, it was felt that OS will be needed as long as human rights for basic needs are at stake, on social and ethical grounds, though more effective and more efficient and not single-approached.*

#### **What is next?**

*There will be other events, prepared by the gender & agriculture groups, please consult the [NICC website](#). The format is not yet decided on.*

*The water-timelines working group agreed to have a second event as follow up on this specific event. This will be in September 2024, location Wageningen-WUR university campus.*

*The final session to conclude this year of “75 years of OS” will be on the 4th of October when NICC will organize a debate with former ministers of Foreign Affairs and reporting of our previous debates like ours today.*

*Most of the audience wishes to be kept posted. They will receive further information by email.*

Dick Bouman 16-04-2024